Power of Preschool
Program Evaluation Report
December 2011

First 5 California Power of Preschool Program Evaluation Report, December 2011

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ACKNOLWEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Children and Families Commission (First 5 California) was established in 1998 via ballot initiative Proposition 10, to allocate tobacco tax revenue for education, health and childcare programs serving children age 0-5 years and their families. The majority of funds are distributed directly to the 58 County Commissions to meet local priorities and needs. In addition, First 5 California has developed and sponsored an assortment of signature programs that are implemented through state-county partnerships.

The Power of Preschool (PoP) demonstration program began operating in nine counties in 2005. First 5 California initiated PoP, a free, high-quality preschool program, to promote early childhood education and school-readiness for all children. The PoP demonstration program was expanded to include additional services, including providing services for infants and toddlers from economically disadvantaged families, for the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year (FY) under a new name: PoP Bridge. Eight of the original nine PoP counties chose to participate in PoP Bridge.

The University of California Los Angeles Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities (CHCFC) was contracted by First 5 California to conduct a utilization-focused evaluation of the PoP and PoP Bridge programs for FYs 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify the strengths and challenges observed in the PoP/PoP Bridge sites in order to inform early childhood educational programs First 5 California may implement in the future.

Each county submits annual data and evaluation results via the First 5 California Web-based annual reporting system. Information submitted for FY 2010-11 was provided to the CHCFC for evaluation purposes. Additionally, the CHCFC also communicated with staff from each demonstration county in order to obtain all relevant reports their site has produced pertaining to PoP. These reports included Annual Reports, Evaluation Reports created by local independent evaluators, and Regional Impact Reports. A minimum of one recent report was collected from each county, though nearly all provided more than one report. Finally, the CHCFC conducted semi-structured interviews with a minimum of one key staff member, as identified by the Executive Directors, from each demonstration county. The use of multiple data collection methods allows for the inclusion of multiple perspectives and provides richer data for analysis, as well as providing opportunities for data corroboration and comparison.

Key Findings

- PoP programs are serving an ethnically diverse population of children, many of whom are dual language learners

- Children with special needs/disabilities are being served, and counties are identifying and implementing strategies for supporting these children

- PoP preschool and infant/toddler classrooms are high quality: Classroom environmental assessment ratings for preschool classrooms average 5.5 out of a possible score of 7; infant/toddler programs scored an average of 5.3 out of 7 on the classroom environmental assessment

  - While programs are strong in most areas of quality, there is room for improvement in the areas of "personal care routines," and "parents and staff" in preschool programs, and in the area of "personal care" for the infant/toddler programs

- PoP teachers are well qualified:
  - Master Teachers
    - Nearly 58% have at least a Bachelor degree
    - Over 30% have an Associate degree
    - 43% are at the "Advancing" level
    - Over 50% are at the "First 5 Quality" level with a minimum of 24 college credits in Early Childhood Education
  - Assistant Teachers
    - Over 31% have earned an Associate degree
    - More than 16% hold a Bachelor degree
    - Over 36% are at the "Advancing" level
    - Almost 45% are at the "First 5 Quality" level

- The percentage of Master Teachers in the "First 5 Quality" level has increased since FY 2008-09

- Infant/toddler programs are focused on enhancing existing slots

- Counties are using their PoP funding in a variety of ways such as maintaining existing programs, enhancing quality through community partnerships, and expanding access

- Counties find collaborations with other agencies to be beneficial, despite resource intensiveness of these partnerships

- Incorporation of additional child assessments provides valuable information

- There is a desire for facilitation of communication and knowledge sharing between PoP counties

- There are discrepancies in the methods counties are using to calculate reported Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) scores

- County evaluation efforts are inconsistent in methods, rigor, and objectivity

Recommendations for Design of the Child Signature Program

- Provide opportunities for PoP/Child Signature Program counties and programs to share knowledge and engage in improvement work

- Provide training and technical assistance to encourage blending/braiding of funding streams

- Align the Child Signature Program with other ECE initiatives and requirements

Recommendations for Evaluation of the Child Signature Program

- Collect individual child level data from counties

- Track the longitudinal impact of the program on children

- Establish consistency in the use of specific common evaluation tools and approaches across counties

POWER OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Power of Preschool provides enhancement funding to raise the standards for preschool programs. The PoP design builds on and integrates with existing public and private preschool providers, including family child care homes. In the PoP program, children (ages 3-4) who reside in the selected County demonstration sites have access to universal, voluntary and free high quality pre-schools. PoP Bridge encouraged county programs to expand their services to infants and toddlers. PoP sites provide periodic health and developmental screenings, assessments and follow-ups; a preschool curriculum aligned with the California Department of Education developmental standards; kindergarten transition support and family support services. First 5 California reimburses counties on the number of spaces filled by a child who is taught by teaching staff who achieve certain educational requirements and the type of space providing services. FY 2010-11 is year one of the new PoP Bridge.

Program Overview

Target Population: Facilities serving 3 and 4 year olds from low-resourced areas (PoP). PoP Bridge encouraged expansion to serve infants and toddlers. Five of the 8 PoP programs included infants and toddlers in FY 2010-11.

Participation: Sites include publically funded programs (such as Head Start, State Preschool or General Child Care), private centers, family child care homes/networks.

*Maximum County Level Funding Allocation from First 5 California:[*1]*
      Los Angeles $7,804,550
      Merced $420,100
      San Diego $2,683,700
      San Francisco $3,715,450
      San Joaquin $900,600
      Santa Clara $845,200
      Ventura $499,000
      Yolo $730,400

Reporting Requirements:
      Web-based evaluation and other forms
      Mid-year demographics
      Annual Reports

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[*] *Note: First 5 San Mateo participated in PoP, but is not participating in PoP Bridge.
[1] These amounts reflect the maximum funding allocation amounts reserved for each county participating in PoP Bridge FY 2011-12 and reflect the same funding levels authorized for FY 2010-11, as found in the *Power of Preschool (PoP) Bridge FY 2011-12 Request for Funding.*

PURPOSE OF THIS EVALUATION

In order to understand the implementation of the First 5 Power of Preschool demonstration program it was important to learn about the approaches of the individual County Commissions. While there are practices that have been standardized across all sites, there is also variation among county strategies due to the unique circumstances of each commission. For example, a small, rural county is likely to have different approaches to working with community partners than a large, urban county. Identifying these local adaptations was vital to understanding the overall implementation of PoP, including successes and challenges experienced at the program level. This evaluation was intended to help to shed light on "what works" across the diverse populations and geographic areas served by the overall demonstration project.

The findings from the PoP demonstration project have implications for the development and implementation of First 5 California's Child Signature Program (CSP). The CSP will benefit by taking the findings from the current evaluation of PoP into consideration. In this way, the CSP can work to address the challenges and build on the successes of the PoP project.

Methods

This evaluation reviewed information and data gathered from three sources:
- County PoP reports for FY 2009-10
- Annual data submitted to First 5 California by counties for FY 2010-11
- Interviews with First 5 staff identified by County Executive Directors as being knowledgeable about their site's implementation of PoP

The use of multiple sources of data allows for a wider variety of perspectives and experiences to be included in the overall assessment of PoP. Additionally, the collection of data through multiple means allows for triangulation and confirmation of findings.

Review of County PoP Reports

Reports were obtained via County Commission websites and through direct communication with staff. At a minimum, Annual Reports and internal or external evaluation reports were requested from each county.

A systematic review of the reports was conducted in order to identify the variables included. Because of the notable variation in the levels of specificity and overall contents of the reports a matrix was created to log the data available for each county. The variable matrix allowed for data across sites to be compared, highlighted areas of common data collection, and served to illustrate which sites or content areas were missing data and which sites had demonstrated outstanding

data collection efforts. Patterns in reporting and possible areas for comparison of data across counties were determined by identifying variables for which more than four counties reported data.

Semi-Structured Interviews with County Staff

After conducting the systematic review of PoP reports, areas for elaboration, clarification, and further exploration were identified. These areas informed the development of the guide used to conduct semi-structured interviews with designated from each PoP and PoP Bridge county.

Executive Directors from each participating county were asked to identify non-administrative staff they considered to be the most knowledgeable about the PoP program within their County. Staff were contacted and interviews were conducted at scheduled times that were most convenient for the interviewee. In several cases, two staff participated in the interview together.

The interviews covered a range of topic areas pertaining to PoP, including:
- Administration and Structure
- Facility Resources
- Child Assessments and Developmental Progress
- Parent Relations
- Staff Training
- Program Links, Referral Networks, and Partnerships

The above list of topics was shared with interviewees ahead of time, though the more detailed interview protocol was not shared (See Appendix 4) because the questions were to be used as more of an interview "guide" rather asked verbatim and in a specific order. To some extent the questions asked in each interview were dependent on the interviewee's responses, because different demonstration sites inevitably had more or less to say about the various aspects of their program. This more flexible approach to the interview was designed to help gather information that reflected each county's unique experiences with PoP.

Interviews were conducted by phone with at least two CHCFC staff participating during the call. One staff was primarily responsible for asking questions while the other was primarily responsible for taking notes. Interviews were recorded (with permission from counties) in case interviewers needed to review any information while finalizing their notes. Most interviews lasted about one hour, though there were instances where a follow-up interview was scheduled if one hour was insufficient to cover the material. After each interview, CHCFC staff discussed the information provided to compare impressions and understanding, and to determine if any additional information was needed. If so, additional information was requested via email by the main interviewer. Notes were written up and reviewed

by both CHCFC staff to ensure the notes reflected the content of the interview as accurately as possible.

Analysis was conducted by CHCFC staff who were not involved in the interview process in order to reduce bias. This staff had access to all interview notes and the recordings, as needed. Interview notes were reviewed to identify patterns and themes that emerged across counties, and a report was prepared. This was presented to the interviewers, who were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the content and conclusions of the analysis.

FINDINGS

1. Synthesis and Summary of PoP Annual and Evaluation Reports, 2009-2010

Each county is responsible for evaluating their individual PoP program. After a review of all the county's evaluation and local county commission annual reports, there appears to be limited uniformity in how the counties conduct or report findings of their evaluation efforts. Many counties hired outside evaluation consultants to design, implement, perform analysis, and prepare a final evaluation report. Others conducted their own evaluation effort internally. Most county commission annual reports included basic information on enrollment, PoP sites and partner agency collaborations, basic participant demographic information, ECERS-R and DRDP-R scores, kindergarten readiness assessment results, gains in student scores, and child developmental progress. However, there are few common data pieces that all counties report in their local evaluation reports.

County PoP reports included demographic data for parents, as well as any strategies used to encourage or increase parental involvement in their child's education. Some counties reported using parental satisfaction surveys as a part of their internal evaluation efforts, where others did not formally seek feedback from parents.

Many PoP reports provided county commissions' perspectives regarding their progress towards reaching the prior year's recommended goals, any challenges their program experienced in the course of working to make change, and identified a new set of recommendations for program improvement.

In general, counties that utilized external evaluators produced reports that elaborated more thoroughly on their local programs, highlighted the components of the program that the county felt were most successful and unique, and reported findings with a greater level of detail and specificity. In counties that evaluated their programs internally, reports at times lacked comprehensive descriptions about how the program was implemented and tended to incorporate less quantitative data analysis.

It is important to note, however, that the local annual county reports or evaluation reports should not be seen as sole indicators of the productivity or success of any given county's PoP program. Variance in the availability of resources to devote to evaluation efforts, and thus likely differing levels of attention and expertise, went into the production of these reports. In other words, the quality of any given report may reflect the time and expertise given to the evaluation, rather than the quality of the program itself.

2. Annual County Data Collected via Web-Based Protocol

Overall, the PoP reports covered similar general content areas to the data required by First 5 California as part of the annual electronic data submission by counties. However, the electronically submitted data contained a higher level of detail in many cases and access to this data allowed for more precise analysis.

The annual data includes variables representing a number of aspects of program participation and implementation. For example, all counties are required to report on their yearly enrollment or slot changes, classes, provider agencies, ethnic characteristics of participating children, the prevalence of dual language learners, and contextual information about income and poverty levels in the area served.

Total Number of Participants Served by County

In FY 2010-11, a total of 25,246 participants were served across the 8 counties of San Diego, Yolo, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Merced and San Joaquin.[2] Figure 1 below depicts the number of participants served by each county.

Figure 1
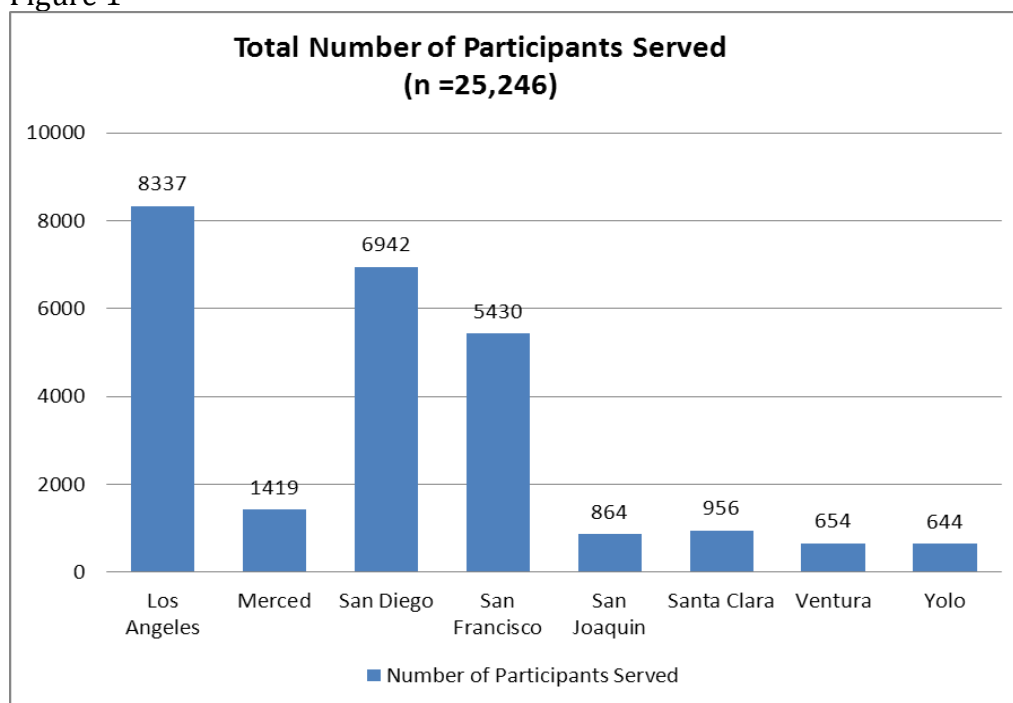
Source: Power of Preschool, Evaluation Questions and Data Collection Form for FY 2010-11.

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[2] The number of participants served is not the same as the number of enrolled PoP spaces. Due to enrollment changes for individual children that may happen throughout the year, multiple children may be served by the same space.

Demographics

PoP counties provided race and ethnicity data for 24,681 of the 25,246 children at PoP programs statewide. Hispanic/Latino was the largest known ethnic group among the PoP enrollees; they represented 66% of children whose ethnicity was reported.

The pie chart (Figure 2) below provides the ethnic breakdown of PoP participants for FY 10-11, including those participants for which ethnicity was not known or reported.

Figure 2

Ethnicity of Pop Participants FY 10/11

3.1% 2.7% 2.0% 0.8% 10.8%	
8.2%	6.9%
1.3%	
64.5%	

Legend:
- ■ Alaska Native/American Indian
- ■ Asian
- ■ Black/African American
- ■ Hispanic/Latino
- ■ Pacific Islander
- ■ White
- ■
- ■
- ■
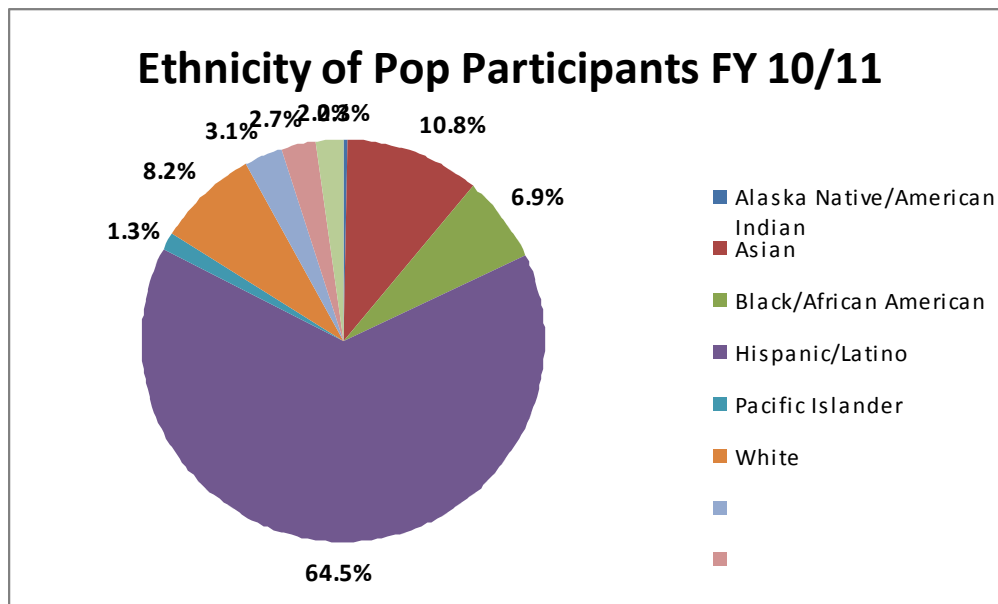
Figure 3 provides the breakdown of the multiracial PoP participants. The majority of multiracial participants were of other mixed races than those listed in the First 5 California annual reporting system.

Figure 3

Multiracial PoP Participants FY 10/11

Legend:
- American Indian/White
- Asian/White
- Black/White
- Hispic/American Indian
- Hispanic/Black
- Hispanic/White
- Other Multiracial

0.3%, 1.0%, 1.9%, 0.8%, 1.0%, 7.1%, 87.9%
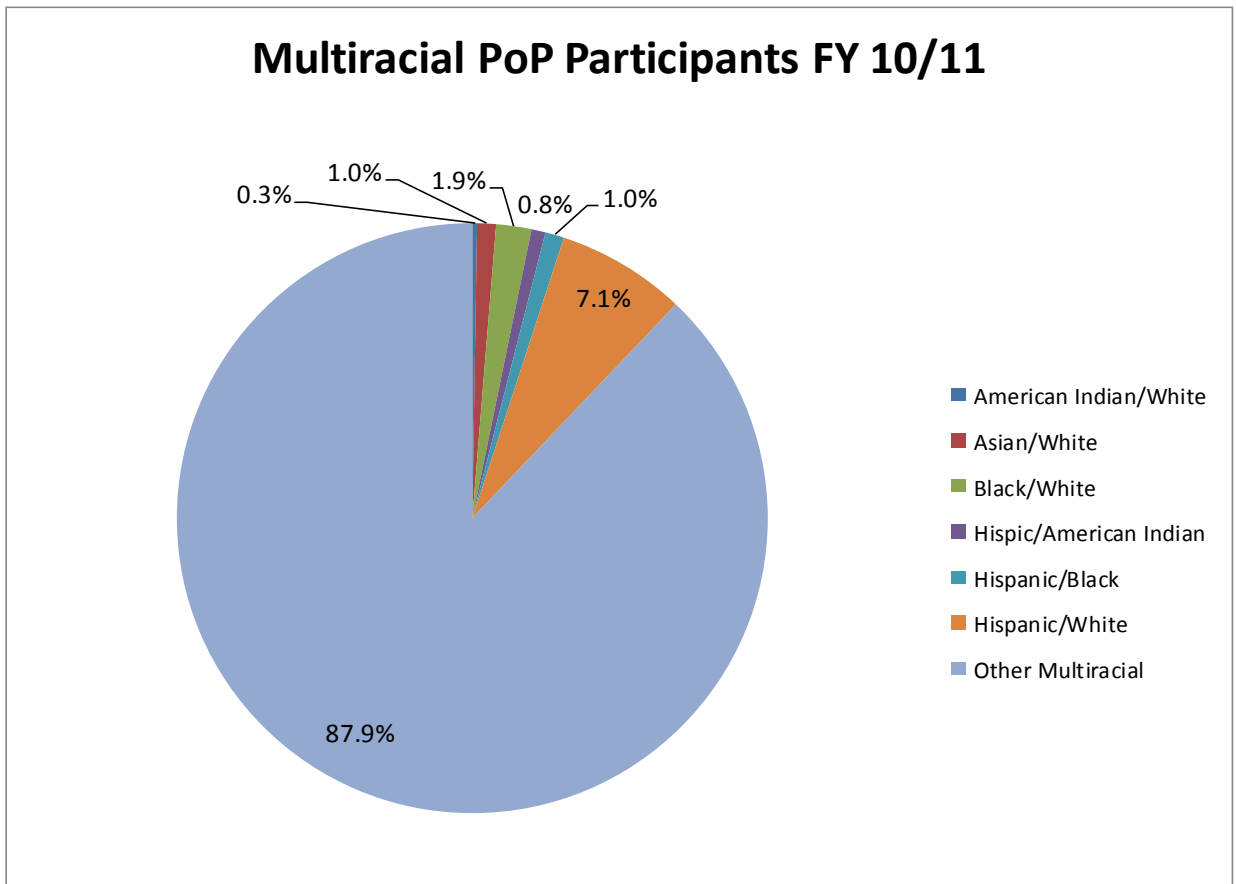
Dual Language Children

In order to support the PoP program's Principles on Equity, counties made active efforts to ensure their ability to serve culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. This included maintaining documentation of the languages spoken by their teaching staff and documentation of the number of Dual Language Learners (DLL) participating in PoP programs.

Santa Clara County reported the largest percentage of DLL children within their PoP program population, representing over 70% of the enrollees.

Figure 4

Percent of Dual Language Learners by County FY 10/11 (n=13,968)

County	Percent (count)
Los Angeles	53.5% (4,462)
Merced	44.6% (633)
Santa Clara	70.2% (671)
San Diego	55.4% (3,864)
San Francisco	61.8% (3,354)
San Joaquin	40.4% (349)
Ventura	59.5% (389)
Yolo	41.0% (264)

Percent of Dual Language Learners
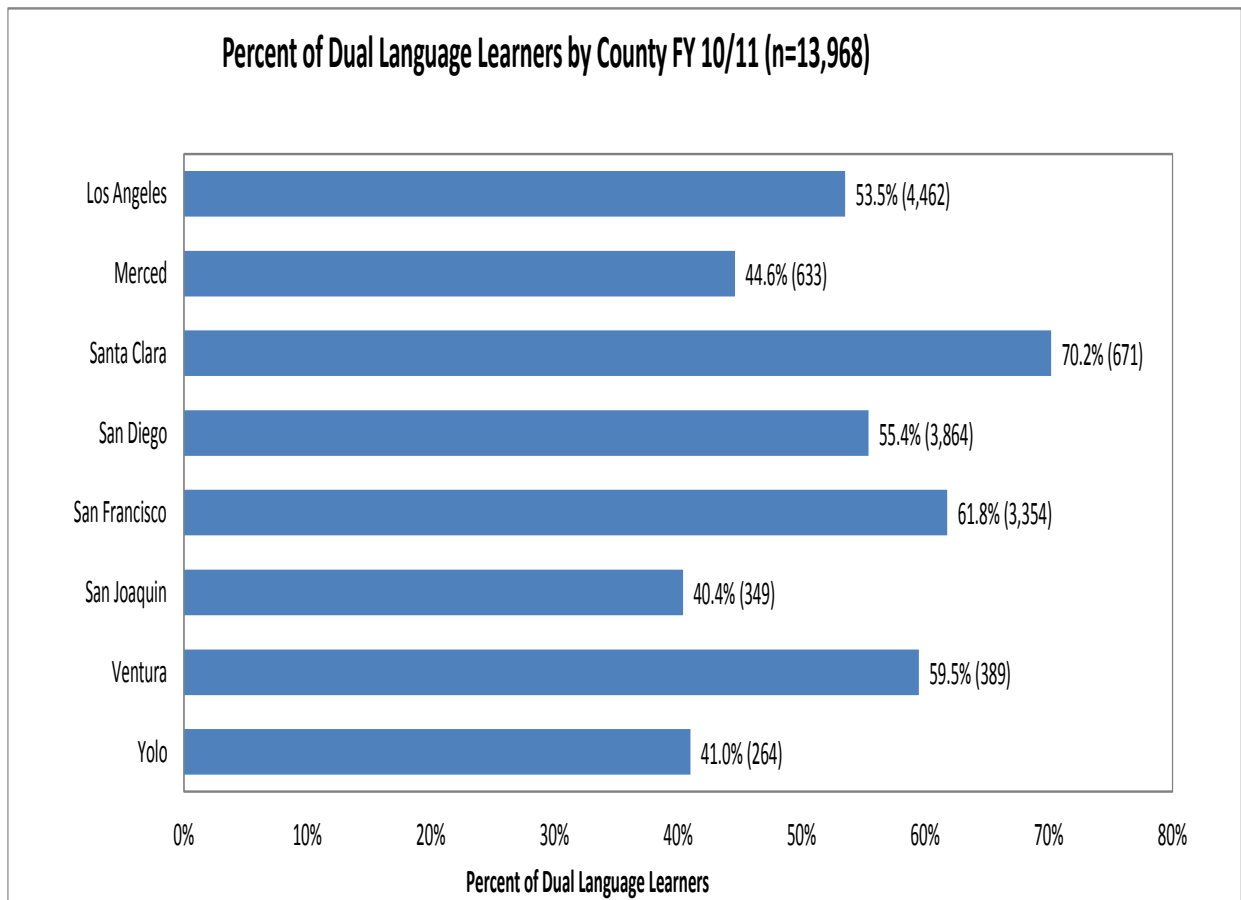
Participants with Disabilities

Figure 5 displays the percent of children identified with a special needs or a disability at the end of the year in PoP programs by county. While it is estimated that more than 10% of children ages 0 to 5 have a disability or special need, counties varied in their enrollment of these children. San Joaquin and Los Angeles were the two counties with an enrollment of children with special needs that exceeded 10%. Overall, children with special needs accounted for 5.3% of PoP program enrollees.

Figure 5
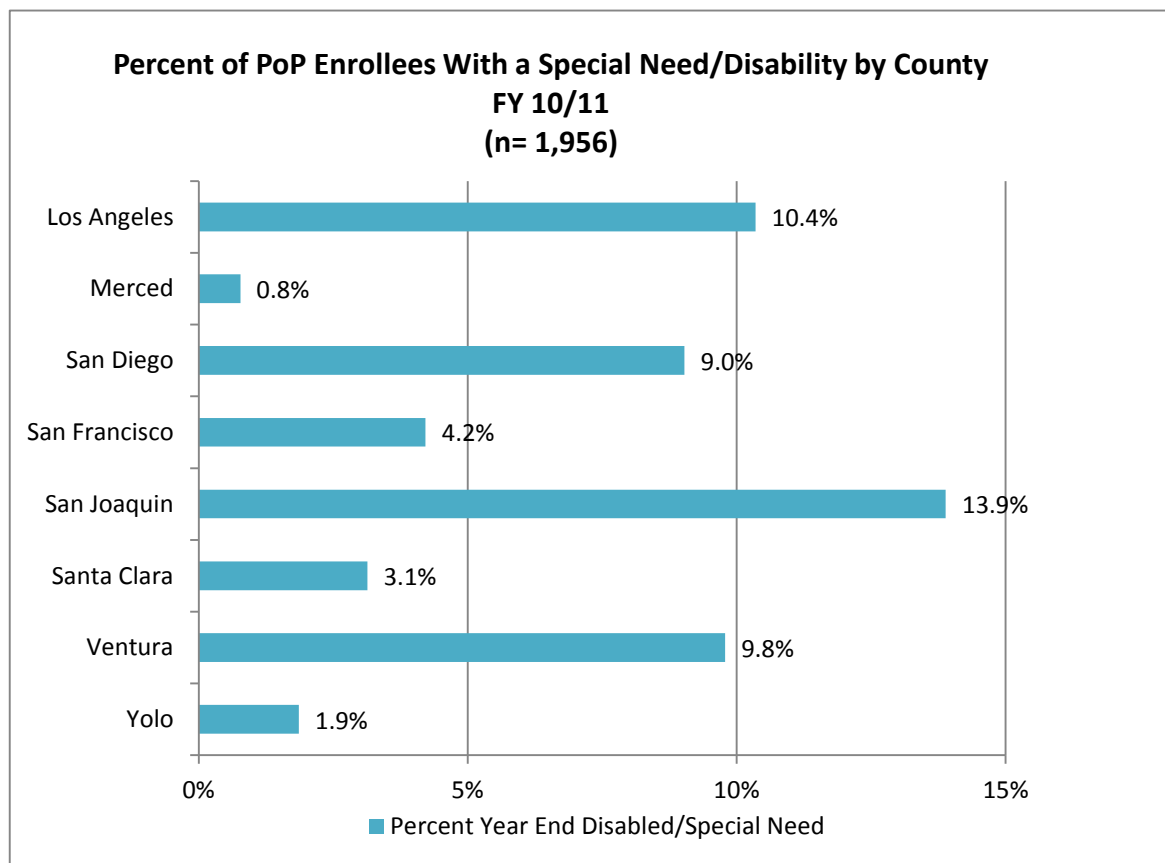
Developmental Screening of Children with Special Needs or Developmental Delays

A variety of assessment tools were used by counties to assess children's developmental progress, and to identify those with special needs. Of the 8 counties reporting on the screening tools used for FY 2010-11, all used the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Some of those counties used other screening tools in addition to the ASQ (See Table 1). Additionally, some counties reported incorporating mental health screenings and services, IEPs, and service referrals into their strategies for identifying and serving children with a variety of special needs.

Table 1. Screening Tools Used

Tool Name	Number of counties using the tool
Ages and Stages Questionnaire	8
Ages and Stages Questionnaire - Social Emotional	1
Other	2
Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status	2

Child Outcomes: Desired Results Developmental Profile 2010

PoP program requirements direct participating counties to use the Desired Results Developmental Profile 2010 (DRDP 2010), a comprehensive assessment tool designed for teachers to observe, document, and reflect on the learning, development and progress of all children. In FY 2010-11, participating PoP counties submitted DRDP data for 42% of all PoP enrollees (10,514 of 25,246 children).[3] Children are rated on five DRDP developmental levels, from lowest (Not Yet at First Level) to highest (Integrating).

Due to data reporting inconsistencies across counties, accurate interpretation of the DRDP 2010 results for FY 2010-11 is difficult. Several counties counted every time a child scored at a certain level; one county used the percentages; while the other counties based their numbers on a calculation of the average where the number of children rated at each level for a measure were summed and then divided by the number of measures in that level. Because their reporting techniques varied, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the significance of the scores reported, and give substantive meaning to the changes seen. However, as depicted in Figure 6, pre- and post-program assessment data reflect the percentage increase at the Integrating developmental level for each Child Desired Result area:

- 765% for the measure Personally and Socially Competent

- 1124% for the measure Effective Learners

- 455% for the measure Physical and Motor Competence

- 794% for the measure Safe and Healthy

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[3] Most PoP counties reported DRDP data only for children who had both a Fall and Spring DRDP assessment ("Pre" and "Post") as required by First 5 California.

Figure 6: PoP Change in DRDP scores

Power of Preschool - Integrating Level Change in FY 10/11

(bar chart)

Y-axis: **Number of PoP Children** (0 to 9000)

X-axis: **Child Desired Result Area**

Legend: Beginning of Year, End of Year

- Children are Personally and Socially Competent: 915, 7,919
- Children are Effective Learners: 292, 3,574
- Children Show Physical and Motor Competence: 351, 1,949
- Children are Safe and Healthy: 154, 1,381

Classroom Learning Environments: ECERS-R and ITERS-R

Preschool Programs

The ECERS-R is an assessment tool designed to assess group programs for preschool and kindergarten aged children (age 2-5).

The 43-item rating scale covers seven broad environmental categories, listed as subscales:
- Space and Furnishings
- Personal Care Routines
- Language-Reasoning
- Activities
- Interactions
- Program Structure
- Parents & Staff

Subscales are measured using a seven-point program quality rating scale ranging from 1 (inadequate), 3 (minimal), 5 (good), to 7 (excellent). Trained, independent observers administer the ECERS-R assessment. Counties vary on the frequency by which they conduct the ECERS-R assessment for each preschool program; some counties assess programs annually, while others assess every other year.

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The bar graph in Figure 7 displays the mean ECERS-R subscale scores overall. The overall mean subscale scores across programs indicate that PoP programs fall in the "good" to "excellent" quality range in most areas of program quality. The categories for which programs scored the lowest are in Personal Care Routines, which covers mealtime practices, naptimes, toileting/diapering practices, and safety practices; and in Parents and Staff, which covers provisions for parents, provisions for personal and professional needs of staff, staff interaction and cooperation, supervision and evaluation of staff and opportunities for professional growth.

Figure 7
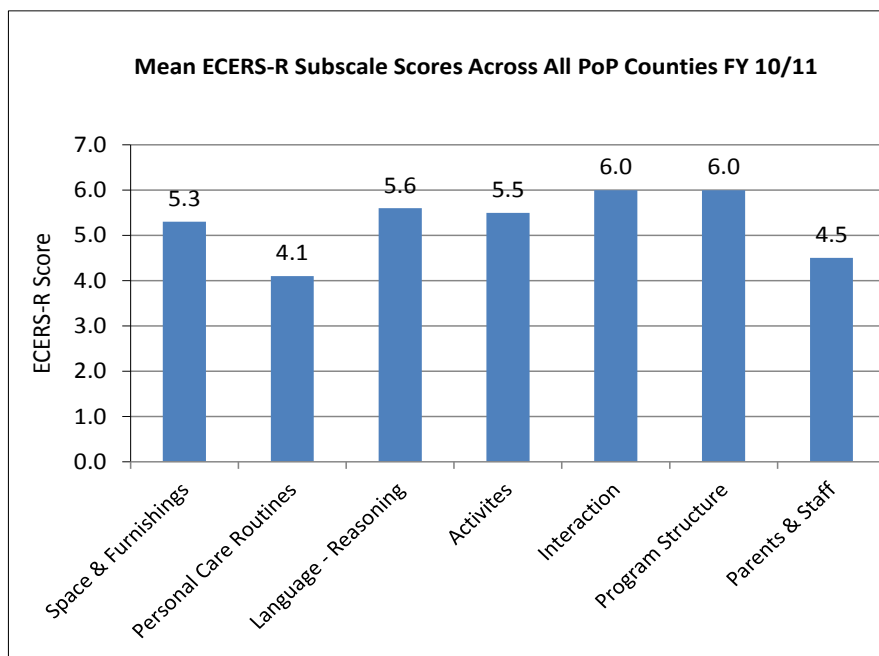
Figure 8 displays the average global ECERS-R Scores for all 8 counties. Each county's scores are used to compute an average mean score in each of the various types of programs, state preschool, head start, general child care, and other. Additionally, a mean score is computed for all types of programs combined.

Figure 8
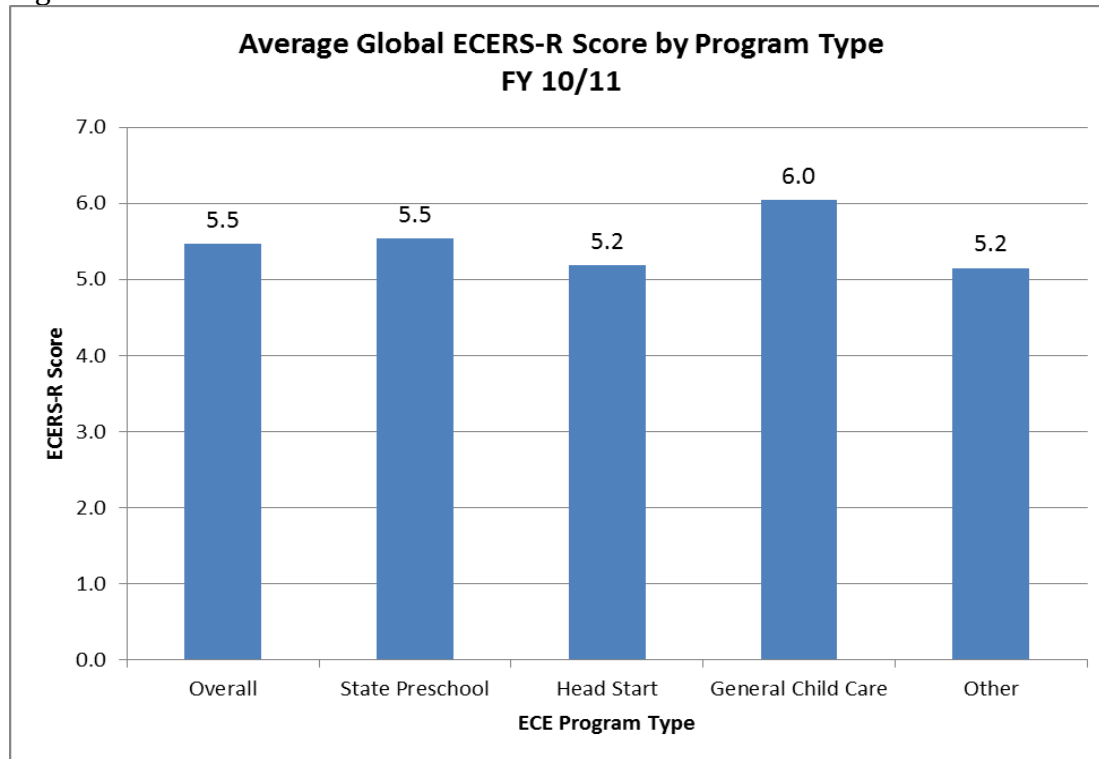
As the figure above indicates, there is little difference in ECERS scores among the various types of early care and education programs. Programs generally scored in the "good" to "excellent" range across the different types.

Infant/Toddler Programs

Five of the eight PoP counties expanded their programs to serve infants and toddlers in FY 2010-11. The tables below represent the average scores across the five counties that reported scores for the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R). The ITERS-R is an environmental assessment tool designed to assess group programs for children from birth to 2 ½ years of age.

The 39-item rating scale covers seven broad categories, listed as subscales:
- Space and Furnishings
- Personal Care Routines
- Listening and Talking
- Activities

- Interactions
- Program Structure
- Parents & Staff

Subscales are measured using a seven-point program quality rating scale ranging from 1 (inadequate), 3 (minimal), 5 (good), to 7 (excellent). Trained, independent observers administer the ITERS-R assessment.

The five counties serving infants and toddlers reported ITERS-R scores: Merced, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Ventura, and Yolo.

The bar graph below (Figure 9) represents the average global ITERS-R Scores for all 5 counties reporting data.

Figure 9

Average Overall Global ITERS Scores by County FY 10/11
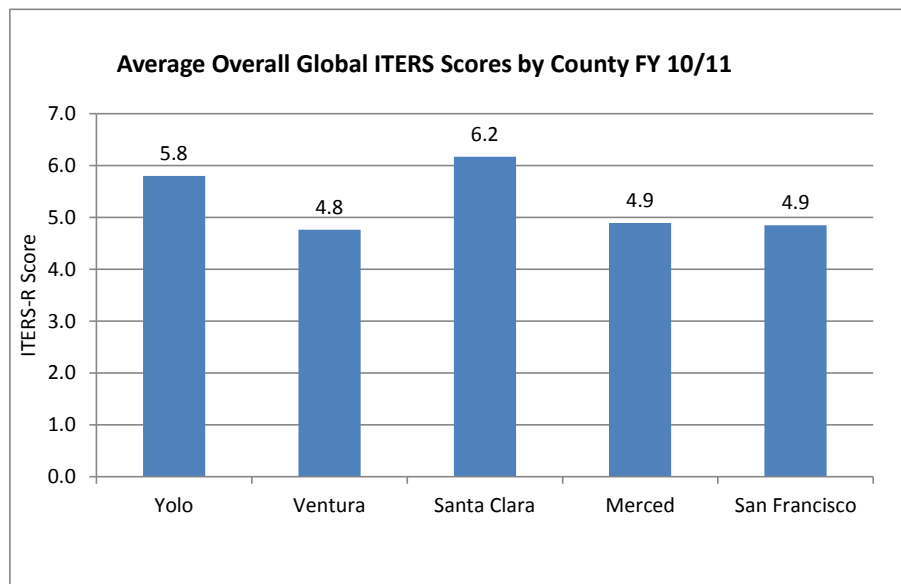
The ITERS-R data indicate that PoP infant/toddler programs are of high quality, with classroom environmental assessments scoring an average of 5.3 out of a possible score of 7.

Figure 10 shows the average ITERS-R Scores statewide by subscale.

Figure 10
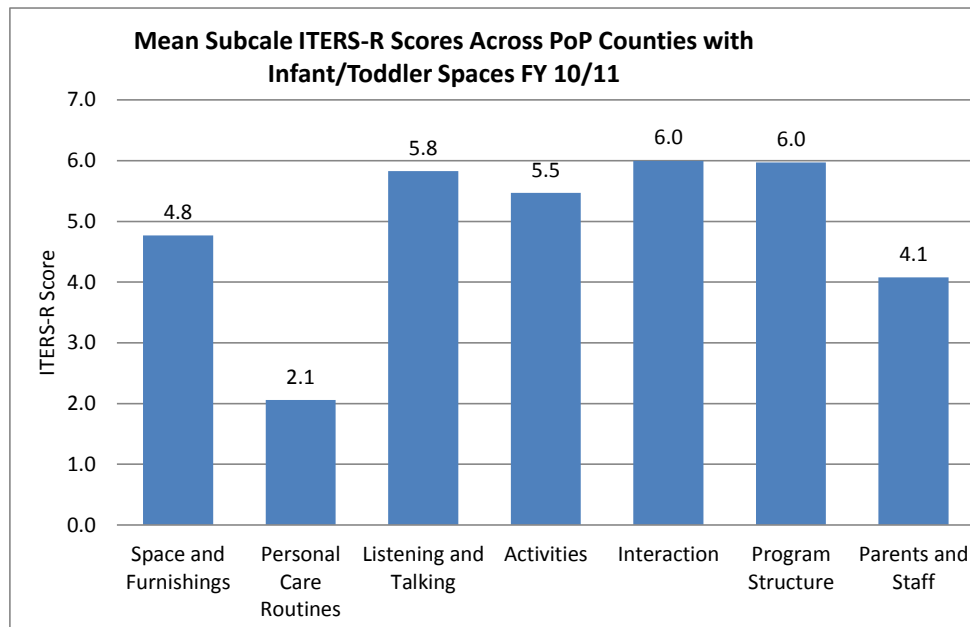
Mean Subcale ITERS-R Scores Across PoP Counties with Infant/Toddler Spaces FY 10/11

Subscale	Score
Space and Furnishings	4.8
Personal Care Routines	2.1
Listening and Talking	5.8
Activities	5.5
Interaction	6.0
Program Structure	6.0
Parents and Staff	4.1

The overall mean subscale scores across programs indicate that PoP programs fall in the "good" to "excellent" quality range in over half of the areas of program quality. The category for which programs scored the lowest and fall below "minimal" quality is in Personal Care Routines, which covers mealtime practices, naptimes, toileting/diapering practices, and safety practices. The low score in this subscale is of particular concern as this category covers areas of basic licensure requirements for early care and education programs.

Teacher and Staff Quality, Training & Turnover

Annual county data includes information about the educational levels of program staff, availability and use of stipends for professional development activities and education, and student-teacher ratios in PoP classrooms. In FY 2010-11, PoP courses and trainings were provided to assist preschool teachers and administrators with gaining the expertise needed to be inclusive of and effectively support children with disabilities and other special needs, as well as children who are Dual Language Learners.

Teachers received various types of trainings, and the two most common topics across counties were pre-literacy development and social-emotional development. Other training topics included the CDE Child Development Division Preschool Learning Foundations, the various domains of child development, working with different child populations, and topics relevant to working with families.

Table 2 shows the types of trainings offered and the number of counties that offered them.

Table 2. Trainings Offered

Type of Training Offered	# of Counties Offering Training Type
Art/music	3
CDE-CDD Preschool Learning Foundations	5
Classroom management	6
Community resources	5
Cultural competency	5
ECERS/FCCERS or other environmental assessment	6
Dual language learners	6
Gross motor/Physical development	5
Health/nutrition	4
Pre-literacy	7
Referral and social services	4
Science/nature	4
Social emotional	7
Special needs	6
Working with families	5

Table 3 below shows the number of trainings offered to PoP programs. The number of trainings per county ranged from 1 to 15.

Table 3. Number of Trainings Offered be Each County

	Los Angeles	Merced	San Diego	San Francisco	San Joaquin	Santa Clara	Ventura	Yolo
# of Trainings Offered FY 10-11	8	11	10	5	14	15	1	14

The PoP funding model pays providers based on teacher educational level. Teachers can move up the quality scale through acquisition of child development teacher permits, experience, completion of applicable college credit coursework, and attainment of an advanced degree. Depending on their attainment of the criteria above, teachers can fall into three categories: "Entry", "Advancing" or "First 5 Quality," with First 5 Quality signifying the highest achievement level.

A review of teacher qualifications indicates that PoP teachers are well qualified. Nearly 58% are "Master" Teachers with Bachelor's or higher degrees in early childhood education. In addition, more than 50% of "Master" teachers meet the First 5 Quality level requirements (See Appendix 3). This is an increase from the FY 2008-09 findings, which indicated that 45% of "Master" teachers met the First 5 Quality level.

Parent Satisfaction with PoP Programs

Parents in PoP programs complete the DRDP parent survey, which assesses parent satisfaction with their child's program and how it supports a child's learning and development. The survey also contains items intended to measure family members' perceptions of their progress toward reaching the two Desired Results identified for families, which focus on families' supporting their child's learning and development, and achieving their goals. Seven of the 8 PoP county programs reported DRDP parent survey results. The DRDP parent survey was not administered in one county this year. It is unclear why it was not administered as no explanation was provided by the county. Results of the survey indicate that families are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's program (99%). They also report feeling that their child is safe and happy in the program.

Table 4 summarizes the results from the parent survey that was administered by seven of the eight PoP counties. [4]

Table 4. DRDP Parent Survey Results for FY 2010-11

Topic	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Yes	No	N/A[5]
1. Overall satisfaction with program	76.6%	22.9%	0.5%			
2. Feeling that child is safe and happy in program				99.1%	0.9%	
3. Whether parent received information (about child development, resources, about program policies, etc.)				91.7%	8.3%	
4. Whether parent would like additional information on anything else				30.0%	70.0%	
5. Whether child's attendance made it easier for parent to take/maintain/accept a job or continue education				46.0%	9.8%	44.1%
6. Parent Satisfaction with Program Characteristics	70.8%	27.9%	1.3%			

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[4] DRDP parent survey questions 2, 3, 5, and 6 have sub-items; however, counties were asked to report on an aggregate count of parent responses to these questions. Therefore, the percentages reflect the counts that counties provided as the aggregate to the question.
[5] "N/A" means Not Applicable.

3. Semi-Structured Interviews

The purpose of the PoP interviews with local staff was to identify the similarities and differences, successes, and challenges in the implementation of PoP programs. In addition, the interviews sought to elicit and highlight promising strategies and approaches that contributed to successful implementation and supported enhanced quality. The interview findings are discussed by the topic areas covered in the interviews.

Administration and Structure

The interview included questions related to administration and structure and highlighted the internal structure that counties have created in order to effectively manage their PoP programs, including setting target numbers for enrollment and implementing strategies for meeting targets. The evaluation also sought to elicit from counties the ways in which counties have expanded their PoP programs to include birth to age three populations, and suggestions that counties have for increasing provision of services to this younger population. Counties were also asked for any suggestions about state and/or county level program modifications for supporting management of PoP programs.

Counties reported partnering with a variety of service agencies to administer PoP programs. Agencies ranged from school district and federal and state pre-school programs to family child care homes. All counties reported serving First 5 California's priority population, and all but two have specific targeted communities in which PoP programs are located. Six counties reported meeting or exceeding enrollment goals, and three counties were just short of enrollment goals.

Counties used a variety of strategies to assist sites in meeting their target enrollment numbers. All counties reported that provider agencies are primarily responsible for outreach and enrollment, and several counties mentioned use of the Centralized Eligibility List for monitoring enrollment across centers while public funding for this program was available. Counties reported that many provider agencies have worked to establish a strong presence in the communities they serve, and have done extensive community outreach through flyers, web presence, presentations at community fairs, working closely with schools, and holding promotional events. Several counties also mentioned "word of mouth" as an effective means of getting the word out to parents. One of the larger counties described having used an extensive media campaign through their Communications Department, which included advertisements about the program through radio, newspapers, billboards and other signage, as well as an 800 number for parents to call to get information.

Counties' success with enrollment was attributed to high demand and low supply for pre-school programs and leveraging the reputation and outreach strategies of local provider agencies with long-standing presence in and knowledge of the

community. One county that reported being "just shy" of enrollment noted that while the path to meeting enrollment goals was clear "*the main impediment is that many programs are not up to par with the PoP standards. Programs that we are targeting tend to be programs that serve large numbers of low-income children. We are currently funding pre-PoP programs to get them up to baseline quality criteria. But it's a long process to move them up to quality level. As soon as they're able to meet the standard, we can bring them in and meet the target.*"

Counties expanding to infant/toddler programs reported that they focused on enhancing existing rather than creating new slots, and gave programs flexibility in investing in self-identified priorities that would promote increased quality in their programs. One county that was not able to sustain expansion to infants and toddlers explained that their challenge in serving this age group was the lack of alignment between the number of children to be served through their California Department of Education contract and the PoP requirements to cap group size to enhance quality. Due to unspent funds, the infant/toddler provider agency (in this situation, the school district) was not able to meet their full contract, resulting in a discontinuation of their effort to serve this youngest population.

When asked about program modifications that would help counties to better serve their target populations, counties indicated that the impact of state budget issues on public preschool funding poses challenges. One county described the impact of reduced funding in their county in this way: *"If the state would fund Title 5 programs adequately that would help. When state preschool gets cut 10%, then to avoid having loss of 10 % of slots at the local level, we are having to dip into county funding to fill that gap. This gives us less flexible funding at the local level to improve quality and expand access. The (quality) base is State preschool. If the base gets eroded, then PoP ends up picking up more of the tab. We are more in a maintenance mode."*

While some counties used PoP funding to maintain Title 5 criteria in existing programs, other counties were able to augment PoP dollars to enhance or expand quality by creating partnerships with agencies that provided additional services or supports to children enrolled in PoP programs, or by providing some flexibility to programs in prioritizing quality areas in which to invest. One county reported, *"The value was being able to tell the programs that if you participate in this program, you get money to raise the quality. We gave them flexibility to improve quality in the areas they were interested in, around those indicators."*

Facility Resources/ Quality Environmental Standards

The interview questions also focused on how counties approached assessment of quality, and how some counties built on PoP requirements to move quality beyond First 5 California requirements.

All counties used the standard Environment Rating Scales (ERS); the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS, described earlier), the Family Child

Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCRS) and the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS, described earlier). The tools were administered by outside assessors and used to evaluate and support providers in achieving higher levels of program quality. In general, feedback from the providers about ERS tools and evaluation procedures was positive. In discussing ERS implementation, several counties highlighted that programs value the coaching they received from the assessors or other designated coaching personnel in conjunction with the evaluation process. One county reported that evaluation and coaching has led to increased accreditation of more sites and providers. The following quotes from counties illustrate feedback from programs on the link between ERS evaluation and coaching:

> *"Teachers are happy to have the immediate feedback from the outside contractor who does the ITERS and the ECERs and then immediately meets with them to discuss. They have found that it's good to not have [the assessments] done by the same agency running the program."*

> *"Sites acknowledge, accept, learn, and enhance practices because of [the assessments]. They get full feedback about the review."*

> *"Site staff value the TA coaches and having access to them."*

> *"There are quality coaches assigned to all of the providers, and they use the data to identify areas of improvement and to identify goals to work on for the following year. At first everyone is scared about being graded, and [there is] a sense of being overwhelmed. But as we work with coaches and work on integrating [feedback] they [teachers] become more comfortable and start to expect it."*

Two sites reported that providers find the ERS evaluation process burdensome, time consuming, redundant, and difficult to understand. One county specifically indicated that many providers feel like it (the ERS tools) puts an emphasis on things that are not as critical, and that "it's not a good measure of overall program quality." However, this county also reported that the tool pre-dates PoP and providers understand that it is a requirement. This county also noted that provider dislike of the tool may be related to the fact that it is a "high stakes" assessment.

When counties were asked about improving program quality beyond PoP requirements, most of the counties indicated prioritizing and focusing on a specific area(s) of program quality, and identified strategies used to improve quality in those areas. Several counties identified teacher qualifications as an area of focus for improvement. One of those counties detailed how the tiered reimbursement system based on teacher qualifications led to improvements in that area. The county encouraged teachers to move towards obtaining their Bachelor's Degree and provided bonuses to teachers who had their BA. Consequently, BA attainment increased, with three-quarters of all PoP programs in that county having a teacher

with a BA degree. Counties also reported focusing on improving teacher quality by investing resources in teacher training and professional development.

Counties provided targeted trainings and consultation in curriculum, mental health, special needs, and strategies for dual language learners as ways of improving teachers' skills in specific content areas. One of these counties noted that, *"When we launched PoP, we emphasized Creative Curriculum and invested significant resources in training people on this curriculum."* Counties also identified ongoing coaching opportunities as a focus area, noting that *"Immediate feedback and coaching around assessment tools were prioritized because they were a way to customize improvement approaches at the classroom level and provide ongoing support to teachers and programs."*

Some counties referenced aligning their quality improvement efforts with the recommended tiered quality rating system developed by the Early Learning Quality Improvement System (ELQIS) Advisory Committee. The recommended rating system includes the assessment and targeting of some additional areas of quality, including program leadership and administration and assessment of teacher-child interactions at the higher tiers of quality. When discussing how their county encourages providers to move beyond entry level PoP requirements, one county reported, *"In reaction to the ELQIS 4 tier system, we increased our own local system to a 4 tier system and used ELQIS and ECERS suggested requirements to determine our tiers 1-4. So we have increased based upon our reaction to ELQIS suggestions. Our system is completely aligned with ELQIS."*

Child Assessment and Developmental Process

The interviews with counties also touched upon county implementation of required child assessment and screening tools, and county input on the use of tools for promoting higher levels of program quality and supporting improved child outcomes. Interviews explored how the use of additional child assessments and screening tools has informed professional development decisions and outcome evaluations in various counties. In addition, the interviews asked counties about their commission's use of child outcome data to set their local priorities.

All counties used the DRDP 2010 for state reporting and monitoring child progress. Counties reported that classroom teachers administer the DRDP, with few counties reporting detail on how DRDP training was provided or how providers use the tool. Counties that did report on DRDP training and use, highlighted linking with State Preschool, Head Start and school district programs that also require the DRDP. One county noted that their participation in a consortium of state funded programs outside of PoP was an enormous strength because they were able to link training in aspects of quality, including use of the DRDP, to ongoing peer support. They leveraged quality supports offered through the consortium to support PoP programs progress with implementing and using the DRDP and other approaches to improving quality.

Feedback on the tool was generally positive, with two counties reporting the desire to find alternatives to the DRDP. Two other counties pointed out that the DRDP is helpful for progress monitoring and to inform improvement in classroom instruction, but is not useful for program evaluation. To address this evaluation gap, some counties reported investments in evaluation efforts that look at longitudinal outcomes for children participating in the PoP program, and/or outcome evaluations of PoP program using a variety of additional cognitive, social emotional and/or kindergarten readiness assessments. Counties are working with their county evaluators, and in the case of longitudinal evaluations, with school district partners, to develop and conduct these types of evaluation.

All counties reported that some or all of their providers use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) for development screening, though implementation of the tool varies by providers. Some counties reported that some provider agencies in their counties use the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) as an alternative to the ASQ. Counties also reported that some provider agencies have the staff capacity to administer the tool themselves, while some providers collaborate with partner agencies to implement the ASQ and other screening tools (e.g., vision, hearing, health). Most counties reported that programs are involving parents in completing and reviewing the ASQ; however, the process and depth of review with parents varies. Counties reported varied approaches to follow-up on ASQs that indicate possible concerns. County approaches included partnerships with a range of early childhood organizations for referral, partnerships and/or consultation with specialized school district personnel and student study teams, and blending other county investments (e.g., School Readiness) with PoP investments so that there is a more comprehensive approach to services offered.

Though responses varied between counties, all of the counties believed that results of required assessments influenced the Commissions' approaches to reducing the achievement gap in some way. Some counties reported that commissions value assessment data, stating that commissions rely on the data and use it to "inform the planning of programs that are going to be better for the children" or to "align and better integrate county services." One county explained, that "*Because one of our county priorities was to strengthen the system for early identification, screening and referral, and linkage to other services, we developed our PoP program to be integrated with other funded contractors who can provide services if services are not available in house.*" Another county reported that *"having a consistent tool for all children is really important."* Other counties highlighted the limits of the assessment data for outcome evaluations. One county identified that while assessment data evidences general improvements in child outcomes, *"the question we are left with is what gains are the result of the PoP intervention, versus just part of the natural maturation of the child."* Another county reported caution in "jumping to conclusions about child progress because the program has not been the same from the outset, it has evolved over time." This county noted that now they have finally reached the point where the program has matured enough to measure.

<u>Culture and Diversity</u>

PoP counties were also interviewed about county and program approaches to ensuring quality service delivery in the area of culture and diversity. This includes strategies counties employed and identification of the need for ways to evaluate the impact of specific strategies on outcomes for dual language learners (DLLs).

Several steps have been taken to ensure that counties are appropriately serving children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One county recruited the sites for their PoP programs based on their knowledge of the demographic characteristics of children in other publically funded pre-school programs. They put a strong emphasis on recruiting programs that served immigrant and diverse language populations and supporting children that were receiving other forms of subsidy via Head Start or State Preschool to ensure that the neediest children were being reached. Several counties reported specific professional development initiatives that aim to equip teachers to support dual language learners. These include a dual language BA cohort program for teachers, institutes focused on DLLs, specific focus on and support of native language education and children's home language, and ensuring the language and culture of the students are valued. Four of the counties indicated having high levels of bilingual staff, and all of the counties indicated having printed materials in the languages that are predominant in the communities in which the providers are located.

Additionally, counties identified specific services and efforts geared towards effectively promoting positive outcomes for diverse children. One county employed a research-based curriculum that addresses the needs of Dual Language Learners (DLLs), and another county identified that some of their PoP programs were able to support their teachers in taking advantage of local school district adoption of Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), a model of professional development in the area of language and literacy that promotes English language acquisition, academic achievement and cross cultural skills. Another strategy for supporting DLL students and families was a county wide effort to hire and assign teachers from diverse backgrounds to classrooms based on children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. At the program level, counties reported that providers use a variety of strategies to support culturally and linguistically diverse children and families including the use of parent volunteers to support ELL students, required parent participation, cultural celebrations, and the promotion of acceptance through diversity in daily routines and activities.

Two counties reported that they use DRDP parent survey data as a general means of evaluating outcomes for the DLL population. Only one county identified a specific effort to evaluate the impact of strategies targeted to their DLL population. This evaluation is being done through their county evaluator. Another county highlighted that while they did not evaluate the impact of specific strategies for serving the DLL population, they are using data that shows increases in the percent of Latino and

African American children enrolled in pre-school programs over time as an indication that the provision of quality programs is effective for engaging and serving children from ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented in pre-school in their county. The county explained, *"First and foremost providing high quality preschool program is key. This is particularly the case in our county for Latino children. Lots of that target population doesn't participate in Pre-K. In the past, Latinos had the lowest rate of Pre-K attendance, and we've managed to turn that around in this county."*

Special Needs Populations

Interviews with counties asked about county and program approaches to ensuring quality service delivery to special needs populations. This includes strategies used to enroll and support children with special needs, and noted limitations in evaluating the impact of specific strategies used to meet the needs of children with special needs.

Every county reported strategies to enroll children with special needs, and great efforts have been made to increase enrollment of these children. In general, there is a strong push for the inclusion and integration of special needs children into mainstream classrooms. As such, services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and mental health services and consultation have been integrated into many programs through collaboration with school districts, mental health agencies and other partner agencies.

Teacher trainings on how to work with children with special needs have helped teachers and staff members to feel more prepared to better serve this population. Several counties specifically mentioned training and ongoing support through the Center for Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFEL) as an effective approach for equipping teachers to better serve children with a range of needs. Building close partnerships with agencies that can provide services that extend beyond PoP programs' capacities, working with school districts and special education personnel (e.g. co-teaching environments) and supporting teachers through ongoing coaching and training opportunities emerged as key approaches to improving inclusion practices.

Challenges that counties reported in effectively serving children with special needs included variability in programs' ability to outreach, or "decentralize" outreach to families, maintaining confidentiality in sharing and reporting information, transportation, availability and adequacy of specialized programs, and adequate funding. Similar to the DLL population, few counties are formally evaluating the impact of inclusion approaches on outcomes for children with special needs and their families. Only one county reported plans for a formal evaluation of a specific model of inclusion that one PoP program was able to implement in conjunction with a school district partner. Results of this evaluation are not yet available.

Parent Relations

Interview questions also touched on county and program level strategies for successfully outreaching to parents. PoP programs were asked about partnerships that have been reported to increase both the quality and quantity of parental involvement and their leveraging of projects in order to increase parent engagement opportunities.

Strategies for supporting parent engagement included collaboration with partner agencies that provide parent support services or programs (e.g. Family Resource Centers, university cooperatives, behavioral and mental health programs), and using quality coaches to assist programs in employing parent engagement strategies. One of the larger counties has access to Parent Engagement and Resource specialists. Another county identified linking home visits offered through the School Readiness Program with PoP participants as a way to support parent engagement. This same county identified review of the ASQ with families as another "built-in" opportunity to engage parents in discussion about child development. The Parent Ambassador Program is a unique parent outreach program taking place in one county in which each provider identifies one or two parents to become an ambassador for advocating preschool. The county reported that 463 parents participated in the program in 2010-11, which included attending trainings and speaking to the community. Several counties identified the Raising a Reader Program as an effective approach for encouraging parent support of early literacy activities and engagement in early education. Another county highlighted a parent alumni program that attempts to continue the relationships with parents and families after the child has left preschool as way to support ongoing parent involvement in children's education.

At the program level, parent outreach strategies include involving parents and families in children's development and education through partnerships with parents focused specifically on their child's development, program performance, and special family-centered projects. Many programs encourage parents to attend parent teacher conferences, volunteer in the classroom, and participate in related events such as the Parent Child Summer Arts Studios, parent advisory boards parent workshops and education classes, and social and cultural activities.

Almost every county requires parents to complete the DRDP parent survey, and several counties report use of additional parent surveys (e.g. the Raising a Reader Survey for 4 year olds in State Preschool, the Abriendo Puertas Survey, county developed surveys). However, aside from the DRDP survey, there is no uniformity for evaluating parent engagement activities or parent satisfaction. One county identified that while there is value in reporting high parent satisfaction to county commissions using the DRDP data, approaches to survey implementation limit obtaining robust survey results. According to one county, *"The strategy of giving a satisfaction survey at the beginning of the year doesn't seem like a good idea, and the number of parent surveys returned is low."*

When asked about the effectiveness of parent engagement strategies, counties report believing that their approaches had been very effective. One county obtains anecdotal evidence from providers and reported *"At the end of the year, we ask the sites to write a vignette about a family who was particularly well served by the program."* However, like strategies for the DLL and special needs populations, most counties did not report formal evaluation of parent engagement strategies, noting that funding presents constraints, and that counties rely on partners who are providing the parent engagement programs for evaluation information.

Staff Training

Interviews also focused on county approaches to increasing the quality of teachers and teacher-child relationships. This includes educational planning supports offered to teachers, and strategies and incentives for participation.

Most PoP programs have a mechanism for assessing the training needs of their staff. While some counties requested that programs ask their teachers directly about their program and classroom needs, others elicit that information through program coaches. Most counties used some form of a program coach or mentor to help teachers (and in some cases administrators and assistant teachers) develop professional development plans. One common strategy for determining training needs was to receive feedback from program coaches. Several counties also reported that in order to support enhanced quality, it was important to provide flexibility to programs in setting priorities for investment and to be responsive to staff needs.

Though this is not a uniform practice, another mechanism that counties and programs have used to identify training needs is requiring teachers to complete annual surveys or engage in feedback processes. One county reported on their process of collecting qualitative data from provider staff through interviews with program directors and focus groups with teachers.

Another county reported that their PoP programs ask teachers to answer questions on a variety of content areas including different classroom practices, perceived impact of PoP, children with special needs, and dual language learners. Additional strategies for obtaining teacher feedback or data included using the ECERS as a planning tool for setting staff trainings, administering specific training needs questionnaires, offering pre and post assessment surveys on professional development, and using an end of the year survey to obtain feedback on the impact of the coaching and training teachers received.

All of the counties have educational supports and professional development mechanisms in place for teachers and program staff; however, the types of opportunities vary across counties. Of the nine counties interviewed, six are CARES Plus participants and are actively leveraging their CARES Plus program to provide

training and professional development opportunities and to monitor and move quality in their PoP programs. As an example, one county reported that they *"apply CARES as the corner stone of the reimbursement rate for PoP programs."* Linking CARES Plus with PoP programs has also created opportunities for PoP teachers to participate in an array of trainings, including trainings on the CLASS, DRDP, ECERS, and ASQ.

Non-CARES Plus counties also reported using coaches, and in some counties, "coaching supervisors," to provide teachers and staff with one-on-one training and personal attention aimed at helping teachers to define and meet their educational and professional development goals. Like the other PoP counties, those that are not participating in CARES plus identified that PoP funds have been used not only to provide trainings and coaches, but also to collaborate with other agencies to augment the opportunities available to their PoP programs. In a strained economic climate, several counties emphasized the importance of creating partnerships and collaborations to leverage funding and opportunities. As explained by one county, *"Our most successful strategies and services this year came about through collaboration with our partner agencies and by accessing the many resources available to us like CSEFEL, CPIN, & West Ed's Reflective Curriculum Practice. We used these resources to provide T and TA where it was most needed during these difficult financial times."*

Some counties indicated focusing on teacher retention and mentioned strategies to improve in this area. However, these counties also reported that certain challenges exist that make efforts to support and track retention difficult. Declining revenue has meant prioritizing other areas of importance. One county reported a commitment to CARES-Plus; however, they noted that it was hard to track how much retention or departure from the field is impacted by outside factors that are unlikely for First 5 California or anyone else to address (e.g. economy and spouse/family transition and moves). This county explained that, *"It's hard to tease out the effect of any one strategy on retention."* Another county reported that the *"Constant challenge of retention is training staff and then having them move on to K-12 because they get more money."*

Program Links and Referral Networks/Partnerships

The interviews also reviewed the types of collaborations the counties have developed to support PoP efforts. When possible, this included descriptions of the nature of PoP partnerships, and the reported successes and challenges to effective and on-going collaboration. Additionally, the ways in which county commissions address and support kindergarten transition services for children participating in PoP programs was explored.

Collaboration between PoP and other programs within the counties appeared strong, with each county reporting partnerships with other agencies or programs to leverage resources and better integrate early childhood efforts aimed at improving

pre-school quality. Commonly identified partners included government agencies, school districts, universities and community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and other private entities such as foundations. The primary purposes for collaboration with other agencies included leveraging resources in a strained fiscal climate and increasing connections with and access to resources and wrap-around services for children and families. Many of the counties indicated that collaborations are formalized through memoranda of understanding (MOUs); other counties reported collaboration through informal partnerships and/or long standing relationships.

Several counties reported that because of decreases in funding, collaboration with other agencies and programs has been beneficial. One county stated, *"It [partnership] has helped in terms of being able to craft and deal with funding cuts. These agencies helped put together bridge funding for programs that were put on hold for state funding. Agencies have collaborated to fill gaps in state funding cuts to Title 5 programs. We have also jointly funded facilities expansion to meet the lack of licensed capacity [within the county]."* Another county reported that their most significant partnership was with an agency that helps connect children and families with early intervention services and highlighted that, *"The Abriendo Puertas partnership has gotten good results through the family resource center, and of course the colleges and universities."* One county also emphasized the benefits of braiding funding and sharing resources, reporting that agencies that were competing for dollars now have the latitude to work together and collaborate. *"Never before has this level of conversation, coordination, and commitment taken place, with so many coming to the table to improve early childhood education."*

Coordination of services and agreeing on how to provide services were two of the main challenges reported in achieving and maintaining collaborations. One county summarized their efforts to achieve collaboration as follows: *"Collaboration takes a lot of time and energy. In the end there are great benefits to bringing services that no one organization could provide, but it takes a lot of relationship building, trust, accountability, defining roles and responsibility, time and effort."* Another county explained, *"Organizations lack a history of collaborating in a healthy and free flowing way and lack internal policies, these impede collaboration and sharing of information such as consent forms. In talking to some programs, there is a lack of awareness of services available…Pop has been terrific at facilitating projects to able to say this is what quality preschool includes; collaborations and partnerships. PoP was a great lever to make collaboration happen."*

Counties reported different strategies for supporting kindergarten transition. Many reported activities such as preschool visits to kindergarten classrooms that were already in place through provider agencies and partnerships with school districts. One county identified a program called Parents for Public Schools that reaches out to parents in their county to inform them of the local school district's unusual process for enrolling children in kindergarten, including meeting the timelines to enroll children in parents' school of choice. Another county reported that, *"the transition of children has been more successful than the engagement and transition of*

families." Counties report that primary challenges to more comprehensive kindergarten transition supports were limited funding, and difficulty engaging school districts and principals that are struggling to maintain basic programs.

Recommendations from Counties

As part of the interviews, counties were asked to suggest recommendations for evaluating the PoP program. Six counties reported currently using the CLASS assessment and would recommend its use for evaluating the program. Two counties suggested use of the Program Administrator Scale. Two counties also suggested use of school readiness assessments to track long-term child outcomes and at least two other counties currently use an additional battery of individual level child assessments on a sample of children as part of their evaluation of programs.

Counties were also asked for recommendations they had for more effective implementation of PoP. Half of the PoP counties noted that providing high quality programs are costly, and that the PoP program was more costly to deliver than other Preschool programs. Counties also suggested alignment of reporting requirements and data collection in order to simplify and reduce the burden on programs and counties; alignment with the ELQIS recommendations was offered as an example, which some counties have already attempted to do. Three counties reported valuing the flexibility they've had so far in implementing PoP, particularly concerning the types of programs could participate (i.e. family child care, private centers) and flexibility in deciding on priority areas for investment and allocation of funds.

Multiple counties also suggested funding and time should be allotted to allow counties opportunities to share experiences, learn from one another, and provide input. Opportunities to communicate with one another also extended to suggestions for added communication with the state commission. As one county suggested, *"There should be more communication between the state [commission] and counties. It is to the detriment to the county and state when we don't communicate well with one another, when we don't have a dialogue."*

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD SIGNATURE PROGRAM

First 5 California's expansion and enhancement of the Power of Preschool Program as its Child Signature Program can improve upon the foundation of PoP. The areas for improvement can be distilled into two categories: program design and program evaluation.

<u>Implications for the Design of the Child Signature Program</u>

1. **Provide opportunities for PoP/Child Signature Program counties and programs to share knowledge and engage in improvement work**
Because the Child Signature Program is focused on improving and enhancing the quality of early childhood programs, programs would benefit from engaging in structured quality improvement work that provides dedicated time for them to share experiences, learn from one another, and attempt to implement changes at the same time to test. This type of continuous quality improvement model would facilitate accelerated learning and implementation of quality improvements rapidly. An investment in technology to support a shared work space for counties and programs would facilitate the spread of ideas and learning about what works and what doesn't.

2. **Provide training and technical assistance, along with ongoing coaching**
For ongoing improvement, counties and their participating programs will need ongoing opportunities for training and technical assistance, not only in best teaching practices, but also in administering and understanding the results of various classroom, program, and child level assessment. It is clear from the variances in how counties reported their data that in the future, more guidance, training and technical assistance should be provided to counties to meet the reporting requirements to facilitate cogent analyses based on accurate and consistent reporting.

In addition to professional development and individual trainings, counties report positive feedback from teachers who received coaching that was linked to the improvement plans that were guided as a result of assessments. Programs will find less resistance from teachers in implementing assessments if assessment results are discussed with someone who can serve as a "coach" and provide mentorship in improving the classroom environment, quality of classroom instruction and child outcomes.

3. **Align the Child Signature Program with other ECE initiatives and requirements**
Counties are already engaged in multiple ECE initiatives and have expressed hope that more alignment will be part of the future design of the future Child Signature Program. With the current Race to the Top efforts at the federal level and the

proposed QRIS rating scales recommended by the Early Learning Quality Improvement System committee, First 5 California can encourage participation in the Child Signature Program by aligning their requirements with such initiatives. As noted in the interviews, some counties have already begun designing their QRIS system to be aligned with that suggested by the ELQIS committee.

<u>Evaluation Design for the Child Signature Program</u>

4. Collect individual child level data
While counties reported aggregate DRDP results for PoP enrollees, counties provided various calculations of the data at an aggregate level. In order for First 5 California to draw solid conclusions about the effectiveness and impact of their Child Signature Program on children, reporting of DRDP data and any other child level assessments that may be requested of counties at the individual child level is critical to allowing for analysis of accurate data. There are several ways that programs can currently provide de-identified data securely for purposes of evaluation. This will allow for reporting on differences in children across subgroups. In addition, ensuring that this child level data can be linked to other data at the classroom and teacher level will allow First 5 California to investigate differences between classrooms and teachers as well as across program types. An investment in training and technical assistance to counties will facilitate accurate and consistent as well as timely collection and reporting of data and allow for comparability across programs.

5. Track the longitudinal impact of the program on children
Tracking children's outcomes into their entry in Kindergarten and beyond into the third grade, using third grade state testing results, would also contribute to understanding the potential long-term effects of the program on children. One way counties can facilitate tracking is by developing relationships with school districts in their county that are likely to be the recipients of the PoP children in their K-12 years. Encouraging assignment of individual child level district identification numbers once the child is enrolled in the PoP program can be used to follow them through their entry into the formal school system. Programs best suited for this now are likely existing district-run child development programs. In order to address the data burden this may cause, it is suggested that strategic sampling of a few hundred children throughout the PoP counties that could be tracked longitudinally would be sufficient for assessing the long-term impact of the program on children. An investment by First 5 California to facilitate the development or enhancement of existing data systems that could track children from their entry in various infant-toddler or preschool programs would be worthwhile. Counties and PoP programs that can demonstrate their past experience and success in tracking individual child level data longitudinally should be the first place First 5 invests this type of effort.

6. **Establish consistency in the use of specific common evaluation tools and approaches across counties**

First 5 California has already invested in a few select Educare programs throughout the state and it would be useful to understand the potential differences in impact between the models being implemented through the Child Signature Program versus the Educare model. In order for First 5 California to obtain evaluation reports with more consistency and uniformity it is important to provide the participating counties with more rigorous guidelines as to what should be included in their evaluations and how evaluations should be conducted. Written guidance that provides a framework for what should ultimately be included in reports, and suggested evaluation designs, could prove useful for the counties. This increased level of clarity in regards to expectations for evaluative rigor would also increase the likelihood of reports containing more beneficial and uniform information program-wide. Establishing a set of common tools across these two programs and other First 5 California investments would enable comparability of outcome data across California and across national ECE initiatives.

APPENDICES

1. **1.** Evaluation Theoretical Framework
2. **2.** PoP Abbreviations and Definitions
3. **3.** Statewide Teachers Degree and Permit Levels
4. **4.** Interview Protocol

Appendix 1. Evaluation Theoretical Framework

Power of Preschool Evaluation Framework

PoP Outcome Objective:
Provide enhancement funding for early childcare sites to raise preschool standards across California, thereby establishing networks of universal, voluntary and free high quality preschools.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation
Participation of stakeholders increases

What PoP strategies & services do F5 Commissions & providers report most effectively promote positive outcomes for children and families?

Methodology
Mixed methods approach including triangulation, elaboration and initiation

Use Existing Data

Collect Primary Data

3-Point Strategy:
- County Commission Annual Reports 2009-10
- Local Evaluator Reports 2009-10
- County submitted PoP Bridge data 2010-2011 (avail. October 2011 via First 5 CA)

1-Point Strategy:
- Interview PoP/PoP Bridge staff from each county

Interview protocols developed in conjunction with First 5 CA

Example
Synthesize information from past annual reports and local reports: TRIANGULATION

Interviews with PoP Staff: ELABORATION

Integration of existing data and primary data results into overall findings and implications: INITIATION

Data Analysis
- Triangulation: Multiple data types to obtain converging results
- Elaboration: Additional richness & detail
- Initiation: Divergent findings provoke additional analysis & new understandings

Impact Analysis
- Improvement Recommendations
- Inform Design of new Child Signature Program

Appendix 2. Abbreviations and Definitions [6]

ASQ   **Ages and Stages Questionnaire**
A tool designed to screen children for developmental delays in the first five years of life.

ASQ - SE   **Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional**
A tool designed to screen children for identifying young children at risk for social or emotional difficulties.

CDA   **Child Development Associate**
A child development credential with specific requirements including fulfillment of formal education in early childhood and child care. Candidates applying for CDA assessment must meet specific eligibility requirements:
- Be 18 years of age or older
- Hold a high school diploma or GED
- Have 480 hours of experience working with children within the past five years
- Have 120 clock hours of formal child care education within the past five years

CDE   **California Department of Education**
A state of California department with the core purpose of leading and supporting the continuous improvement of student achievement and education, with a specific focus on closing achievement gaps. CDE is the state administering agency for most of California's subsidized early care and education programs.

Further information about the CDA credential is available at **http://www.cdacouncil.org/cda_obt.htm**.

CLASS   **Classroom Assessment Scoring System**
CLASS is a system for observing and assessing the quality of instructional and social interactions between teachers and students in classrooms.

CARES   **Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Education Standards**
CARES is a program in 44 California counties that rewards early learning teachers and family child care providers for educational attainment and professional development.

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[6] The following definition are from the Power of Preschool Program Evaluation Report September 2009:
ASQ, CDA, CDE, CLASS, CARES, ECE, ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, LAUP, NAEYC, NIEER, PoP, PFA, SN, and SR.

CARES Plus   **Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Education Standards Plus**
CARES Plus is a program in 34 California counties that builds upon the positive impact of the original CARES Program. It is designed to increase the quality of early learning programs for children 0 to 5 and their families by supporting the education and preparation of an effective, well-compensated, and diverse early learning workforce.

CPIN   **California Pre-school Instructional Network**
CPIN is supported by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division in collaboration with the Center for Child and Family Studies at WestEd and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA). The purpose of the CPIN is to provide professional development and technical assistance to preschool teachers and administrators to ensure preschool children are ready for school.

CSEFEL   **Center for the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning**
CSEFEL is focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5. CSEFEL is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country.

DRDP- PS   **Desired Results Developmental Profile – Pre-school (2010)**
The DRDP-PS is designed for teachers to observe, document, and reflect on the learning, development, and progress of all pre-school children, ages 3 years to kindergarten entry, in an early care and education program. The assessment results are intended to be used by the teacher to plan curriculum for individual children and groups of children and to guide continuous program improvement. The preschool tool includes 43 measures that assess development in the following domains: self and social development, language and literacy, English language development, cognitive development, mathematics, physical development, and health. Each item includes a rubric with a description and exemplars for each of four ratings: exploring, developing, building, and integrating. Based on documented classroom observations, the teacher determines the level at which a child easily, confidently, and consistently demonstrates a certain level of behavior on each measure over time and in different settings.

DRDP-IT   **Desired Results Developmental Profile Infant Toddler (2010)**
The DRDP-IT is designed for teachers to observe, document, and reflect on the learning, development, and progress of all infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months, in an early care and education program. The assessment results are intended to be used by the teacher to plan curriculum for individual children and groups of children and to guide continuous program improvement. The infant toddler tool includes 35 measures that assess development in the following domains: self and social development, language and literacy, cognitive development (including early math skills), motor and perceptual development, and health. Each item includes a rubric with a description and exemplars for five to six ratings that correspond with each domain. The self and social, cognitive and health domain ratings include: responding with reflexes, expanding responses, acting with purpose, discovering ideas and developing ideas. The language and literacy domain includes the above and a final rating; connecting ideas. The motor and perceptual domain ratings include: moving with reflexes, combining simple movement, coordinating simple movements, exploring complex movements, making complex movements, and expanding complex movements. Based on documented classroom observations, the teacher determines the level at which a child easily, confidently, and consistently demonstrates a certain level of behavior on each measure over time and in different settings.

ECE   **Early Childhood Education**
An area of study emphasizing programs that help ensure young children are successful in school and are able to enhance their quality of life.

ECERS-R   **Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale — Revised**
The ECERS-R is an assessment tool with a 43-item rating scale covering seven broad categories: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interactions, Program Structure, and Parents & Staff. Subscales are measured using a seven point rating scale ranging from inadequate to excellent. The ECERS-R is administered by trained and independent observers.

ELL   **English Language Learners**
Students with a limited English vocabulary or are non-English speaking.

ELQIS   **Early Learning Quality Improvement System**
The purpose of the Early Learning Quality Improvement System
(ELQIS) Advisory Committee was to improve outcomes for children
and reduce California's school readiness gap by improving the
quality of early learning and care programs. The committee was
charged with developing an early learning rating scale that includes
features that most directly contribute to high quality care and a
funding model aligned with the quality rating scale. The
committee's final report can be found on the CDE website:
http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/sb1629committee.asp

ERS   **Environmental Rating Scale**
The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are observational assessment
tools used to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs.

FCCERS-R   **Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale — Revised**
The FCCERS-R is a tool designed to assess family child care
programs for children from infancy through school-age. The
FCCERS-R is administered by trained and independent observers.

ITERS   **Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised**
The ITERS is a tool designed to assess group programs for children
from birth to 2 ½ years of age. Total scale consists of 39 items. The
ITERS-R is administered by trained and independent observers.

MOU   **Memorandum of Understanding**
A document that expresses mutual accord on an issue between two
or more parties.

NAEYC   **National Association of the Education of Young Children**
NAEYC is a national organization that works to improve the well-
being of all young children, with a focus on the quality of
educational and developmental services for all children from birth
through age eight.

PAS/BAS   **Program Administrator Scale/Business Administrator Scale**
The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership scholars,
Teri Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom, developed the *Program
Administration Scale* (PAS) to provide a reliable and easy-to-
administer tool for measuring the overall quality of administrative
practices of early care and education programs. The BAS is a
reliable and easy-to-administer tool for measuring the overall
quality of business and professional practices in family child care
settings.

PoP   **Power of Preschool**
PoP is a high-quality, free, voluntary, part-day preschool program for all of California's 4-year olds (or 3- and 4-year olds) funded by First 5 California that assists children in becoming personally, socially, and physically competent, effective learners, and ready to transition into kindergarten. This First 5 initiative had pilot programs in Los Angeles, Merced, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Ventura, and Yolo. PoP Bridge is a continuation of this program with the addition of serving infants and toddlers. One of the original 9 counties did not continue with participation in PoP Bridge.

PFA   **Preschool for All**
PFA is a preschool program that aims to provide a strong foundation of learning to prepare all four-year olds for success in school and life. (The original title of the Power of Preschool program was Preschool for All. First 5 California changed the program name to PoP but some counties continue to use the "PFA" acronym.)

QRIS   **Quality Rating and Improvement System**
A QRIS is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care programs. Quality Rating and Improvement Systems generally award quality ratings to programs that meet a set of defined program standards. These systems provide an opportunity to increase the quality of care for children; increase parents' understanding and demand for higher quality care; and increase professional development of child care providers. A QRIS can also be a strategy for aligning components of the early care and education system for increased accountability in improving quality of care. All QRIS' are composed of five common elements: (1) standards, (2) accountability measures, (3) program and practitioner outreach and support, (4) financing incentives, and (5) parent/consumer education efforts.

RAR   **Raising A Reader**
Raising A Reader rotates bright red bags filled with award-winning books into children's homes on a weekly basis. RAR pairs this book rotation with parent training and information on how to effectively share books to promote family literacy habits, language and literacy skills, and a love of learning. Families are also connected with their local public library and children receive a blue book bag at the end of the program to keep so that they can continue the practice of borrowing books and build a lifelong habit of reading.

SN   **Special Needs**
                First 5 California defines children with special needs as having one
                of the following:
                - Children with identified disability, health, or mental health
                  conditions requiring early intervention, special education
                  services, or other specialized services and supports; or
                - Children without identified conditions, but requiring specialized
                  services, supports, or monitoring.

SR   **School Readiness**
                Children enter school physically and emotionally healthy, and ready
                to succeed.

T/TA   **Training and Technical Assistance**

WestEd   **WestEd Excellence in Early Education Institute**
                WestEd is a research, development, and service agency that works
                with education and other communities to promote excellence,
                achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults.
                The WestEd E3 Institute strengthens the quality of early education
                services by promoting professional development of early childhood
                educators to ensure the highest quality early learning experiences
                for Santa Clara County's (CA) youngest children.

Appendix 3. Statewide Teachers Degree and Permit Levels

		Master Teachers				Assistant Teachers			
		On July 1, 2010		On July 30, 2011		On July 1, 2010		On July 30, 2011	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Degree	CDA	0.87	2.31	0.13	0.39	3.62	7.91	3.50	6.47
	AA	29.88	32.12	33.25	30.27	37.25	31.75	40.88	31.27
	BA	56.38	46.96	66.38	51.31	26.25	14.64	31.50	15.83
	MA/Doc	7.25	5.94	8.25	6.48	2.00	0.73	2.13	0.68
	Other	0.25	0.92	0.38	1.14	0.38	1.75	0.25	1.47
	None	11.76	15.88	10.41	16.38	103.88	43.22	118.88	44.27
	Total	111.00	100.00	124.25	100.00	173.38	100.00	197.13	100.00
Level	Entry	8.38	8.73	7.63	25.63	15.64	45.75	6.97	18.88
	Advancing	39.75	43.06	44.00	42.99	37.47	57.63	59.38	36.42
	First 5 quality	62.88	48.21	72.63	50.04	88.38	46.89	93.75	44.70
	Total	111.00	100.00	124.25	100.00	173.38	100.00	197.13	100.00
Permit	Assistant	0.38	0.63	0.38	0.62	22.88	10.96	26.13	11.58
	Associate	2.75	3.34	2.00	2.66	44.38	24.39	48.75	24.62
	Teacher	24.63	18.57	27.50	16.75	25.25	17.59	32.25	19.13
	Master	10.38	7.34	12.00	7.32	8.13	7.70	9.13	6.75
	Site Supervisor	45.38	46.33	52.00	47.66	24.50	18.85	26.50	18.00
	Program Director	13.88	15.54	15.88	16.65	1.63	1.05	2.00	1.13
	None	13.63	14.50	8.34	8.25	46.63	19.45	52.38	18.79
	Total	111.00	124.25	100.00	100.00	173.38	197.13	100.00	100.00

Appendix 4. PoP County Interview Protocol

PoP Introduction Script*

Hello, I'm _____, with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities. I'm calling as a follow-up to an email you received a few weeks ago from Vonnie Madigan of F5CA about the PoP programs. As you may know, we're assisting F5CA in reviewing the accomplishments of the PoP-Bridge demonstrations sites. If this is a convenient time I'd like to ask you a few questions about your PoP program (or if not, perhaps we can schedule a time in the near future…).

[If they are not available but are interested in participating work with them to find a time you may call them back.]

[If they are available and would like to participate, continue with script.]

Great! Let's begin.

First I am going to ask you a few questions about your county PoP program's:

Administration & Structure

- *Who coordinates PoP child enrollment in your county (the Commission or the participant agencies)?*
- *Have any of your programs expanded beyond service to 4-5 year olds to include the birth-3 population?*
- *How many provider agencies are currently enrolled in PoP in [county]? Are you able to provide a list of the providers agencies or types?*
- *Is this above/below the target number set for provider agency enrollment?*
- *What infrastructural modifications/strategies have been implemented or identified as necessary to meet target?*

Next I'd like to hear a little about:

Facility Resources

- *What quality criteria measures are used to maintain facility standards among enrolled PoP sites?*
- *What has been the feedback regarding the systems in place to monitor the administration of these site quality review processes?*
- *What alternative measures have been identified to provide additional site quality information that may be useful?*

Now we will move on to the areas of:

Child Assessments & Developmental Progress

- *In what ways do the child assessments or kindergarten entry screening tests inform Commission staff regarding achievement gap reduction? What specific screening or assessment tools do you use (and who administers those)?*

- *What other (alternative) measures have been identified to provide additional information that may be useful?*
- *What services most effectively promote positive outcomes for children from diverse cultural & linguistic backgrounds? Do you assess the impact of those services, and if so, how (using what methods/tools)?*
- *What inclusion practices have worked well to enroll and support children with special needs?*

We are interested in what role parents play in PoP programs, so next I have a couple questions about:

Parent Relations

- *Do parents at the PoP sites complete an annual survey? If so, may CFR have access to the surveys?*
- *What types of parent outreach strategies have supported child enrollment? (Challenges/successes)*
- *Beyond outreach, what other strategies do you employ to engage parents with their children and the PoP agencies?*

Alright, moving on, the next topic is:

Staff Training

- *Do teachers at the PoP sites complete an annual survey? If so, may CFR have access to the surveys?*
- *What types of personal education planning/supports are provided to the PoP teachers?*
- *What, if any, professional development strategies are you using in your PoP-Bridge program(s)?*
- *What aspects of your professional development strategy seem most promising?*
- *In what way has the Commission participated in developing teacher retention strategies?*

Finally, I would like to learn about your county's:

Program Links & Referral Networks/Partnerships

- *Are PoP agencies clustered in a particular service area or geographic neighborhood?*
- *What strategies does the Commission support to provide kindergarten transition services for PoP children?*
- *Are you currently collaborating with Head Start agencies or CDD (CDE Child Development Division) programs like State Preschool? If so, how was that collaboration established?*

We're almost done. The last thing I am hoping you can share with me are your:

Recommendations

- *What recommendations do you have for effective implementation of PoP to promote positive outcomes for children & families? What would you like to see happen in PoP to make it more effective (whether or not it's a current part of PoP)?*
- *May CFR contact you with follow-up questions as the interview process continues?*

That is the end of our structured questions. Is there anything you would like to add or do you feel like we missed anything?

I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your Commission's experiences with the PoP demonstration project. Do you have any questions for me?

[Address any questions the interviewee may have.]

Again, thank you so much for your time. Goodbye.

*Please note that some content may be tailored to the specific Commission (based on their responses to questions, their interest in participating, and what we know or need to learn about the structure of their program). Consequently, these conversations cannot be accurately scripted in their entirety.